

# Hillandale

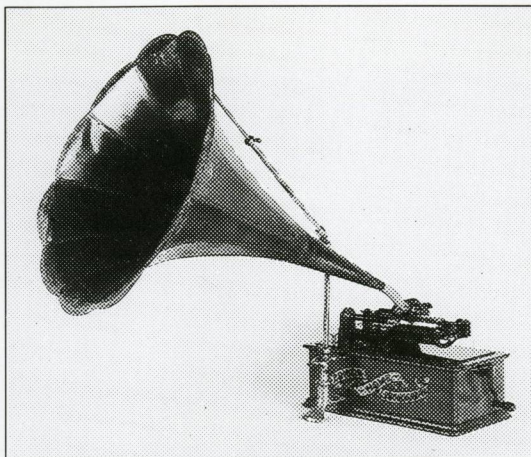
NEWS





# MECHANICAL MUSIC

Wednesday 11 November 1992



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# HILLANDALE NEWS

The Official Journal of The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society

**Founded 1919**

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Front cover illustration: The Bettini Record of Pope Leo XIII (see page 47)

## EDITOR'S CHAT

### Alive and Kicking?

I was surprised to learn the other day that the 78 record has been resurrected by EMI. They have reissued four of Josef Locke's most popular songs from their Columbia label on a 12" 78 record. The titles are: "Hear My Song Violetta" (ex DB 2351); "Charmaine" (ex DB 3109); "Count Your Blessings" (ex DB 2409) and "Goodbye" from The White Horse Inn (ex DB 2336). Obviously these have not been pressed from the original metal-work. New stampers have been made from the tape masters. The four titles come over very well and show Josef Locke at his best. The record should be played at 78rpm using an LP stylus. The record number is 78 EM 231 and may be available to order from your local record store at around £3.99. I would advise those interested in a copy to buy this record before stocks run out as it is unlikely it will be re-pressed. To my knowledge this is only the second time since they withdrew 78s in 1961 that EMI have issued a 78 record on a normal commercial basis.

### Transfers for Edison machines

Our booklist now stocks a range of **superb quality** "Varnish" transfers supplied by the Antique Phonograph Supply Co. of New York. These have an advantage over the more common waterslide type in that there is virtually no detectable edge when in place. Varnish transfers for Edison machines include:

Standard Banner	£5.00
Home Banner	£7.00
Gem Banner	£7.00
Triumph Banner	£9.00
Concert Banner	£11.00
Trade Mark	£1.50
Edison name	£2.00

New and existing waterslide transfers will still be stocked and include the Columbia Disc Graphophone and Grand Prize type at £2.50 and the Standard, Gem, Fireside Home and Cygnet horn transfers at £2.50. Other waterslide transfers still available include the red and gold Pathé trade mark, corners for the Fireside, Triumph, Concert and Red Gem and miscellaneous types for Edison, Columbia, Pathé and EWG machines. Send SAE for complete list to: C.L.P.G.S. Booklist, c/o George Glastris, [REDACTED] Brighton BN2 2SR, United Kingdom.

Please note that material intended for inclusion in Hillandale News must reach the Editor not later than **six weeks before the first day of the month of issue.**

Hence the deadline for the **August** issue will be **15th June 1992.**

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Views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor.



## RECORDS IN STORE by Frank Andrews

Being a fuller version of the programme presented at the August 1990 Society Meeting in Neasden

### Part V

#### CROWN 9" 1935 - 1937

The Eclipse records were eclipsed by the new Crown 9" diameter records of September 1935. Again a product of the Crystalate Gramophone Manufacturing Co., the label was exclusive to Woolworth's chain stores. The Musical Director was still Jay Wilbur who was also responsible for Crystalate's own new 10" Rex records introduced some two years earlier.

Just over 350 Crown records formed the complete catalogue by the time they terminated in March 1937, beginning at catalogue number 1.

The first labels were black printed in gold but after about 200 issues the labels were changed to blue and gold. A special Nursery Rhymes Series numbered NR.1 to NR.5 were given a yellow label printed in blue and orange and depicting nursery rhyme characters.

The matrix series began at H.101 with the first recordings having been made in June 1935. The "H" prefix probably indicated that Arthur Haddy was the recording expert for Crystalate, whom he had joined after leaving employment with The Western Electric Company.

The demise of the Crown records was a result of the acquisition of Crystalate's business in recording and pressing discs by The Decca record Co. Ltd. who had refused to renew the Crown contract with Woolworth's. They also affirmed that there would be no profit in making and selling a 10" disc which Woolworth's were hoping could be made for them to sell at their "nothing over sixpence" price. Pseudonyms were not generally employed for artistes on Crown records. Crown was never registered as a trade mark. The discs should not be confused with other maker's discs which bore "Crown" as part of their label names, e.g. Crown Perfect for Selfridges, Crown Record of 10" diameter from Polyphon (pre-Great War of 1914) and the 6" The Crown from J. E. Hough Ltd.

{Crown 223 with Charles D. Smart, at a cinema organ, and with an un-named vocalist in "Au Revoir But Not Goodbye" - probably the Wurlitzer in The Plaza Cinema in London's West End - was played at Neasden.}

#### EMBASSY 10" RECORDS

F. W. Woolworth & Co. Ltd., were without any own brand records for seventeen years after the Crown records ceased to be sold. Then, in 1954, Woolworth's introduced their 10" Embassy Records. Embassy records were recorded and manufactured by Oriole Records Ltd., who had applied for Embassy as their registered trade mark on December 23rd 1953 and which received its registration in May 1954. Embassy records were given cerise and silver labels as were the contemporary releases on the 7" 45rpm vinyl discs.

The discs were manufactured at Oriole Records' factory at Clinton Stanley, near to



Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire. Oriole Records London addresses were 119, Bishopsgate E.C. and 315/7 Oxford Street W.1. The company was founded by Jacob Levy along with his associate business of Levy's Sound Recording Studios, who traded out of 19, High Street, Whitechapel, London E.1. as Levy's Public Phono & Cycle Stores. They also had premises in Regent Street and later in Bond Street along with his Recording Studios. The business dated from the 1890's.

Levy's first label had been "Olympic" for which he had the exclusive use from The Sound Recording Co. Ltd. whose registered trade mark it was. In 1931 Levy introduced his new Levaphone Records, for which he registered a trade mark in 1924 after having introduced his first series of Oriole Records in August 1927 for which he had a registered trade mark dating from May 25th of the same year. A second series of Oriole records was begun in 1932, which lasted for about one year and their third introduction to the market came some eighteen years later in 1950. Levy's had been advertising, since 1949, that it was able to undertake recordings, the making of galvanos and the pressing of finished discs.

The Second World War and its aftermath saw all currencies pass through inflationary periods and it compelled Woolworth's to abandon its "Nothing Over Sixpence" policy, but I have been unable to discover at what price the 10" 78rpm Embassy Records were sold. The main standard repertoire discs were given a "WB" prefixed catalogue series. (Oriole usually used a "B" prefix to denote a 10" disc - the "W" was obviously for Woolworth's). Starting at WB 101 there were, at the least, 433 different issues in the series.

A few other Embassy records were given other catalogue number prefixes, usually indicative of the repertoire recorded. These were "CR" for Children's Nursery Rhymes, "HT" for "Holiday Time" selections, "XC" for Christmas Carols and a "PT" prefix for a type of repertoire I have not yet found out about. It is possible that all these four prefixes shared one number series, beginning at 100 or 101, as none of the known numbers are duplicated. In fact, CR 103's matrix numbers are immediately succeeded by the matrices on XC 104.

Embassy artistes' credits were those of the artists who made the recordings. The matrix series was prefixed "X", given to the discs after transfer from the recorded tapes or acetates, and generally followed in numerical order with the advance of the catalogue numbers. However, having begun with X 5000 the matrices were applied in batches; thus they jump from a 5000 series to a 5500 series to be followed by others in a 5700 series, a 6300 series and a 9000 series, which continued to the last disc in the 10" size. The 45rpm size continued the series with 45 suffixed to the matrix number. The last of the 10" Embassy discs were sold during 1960.

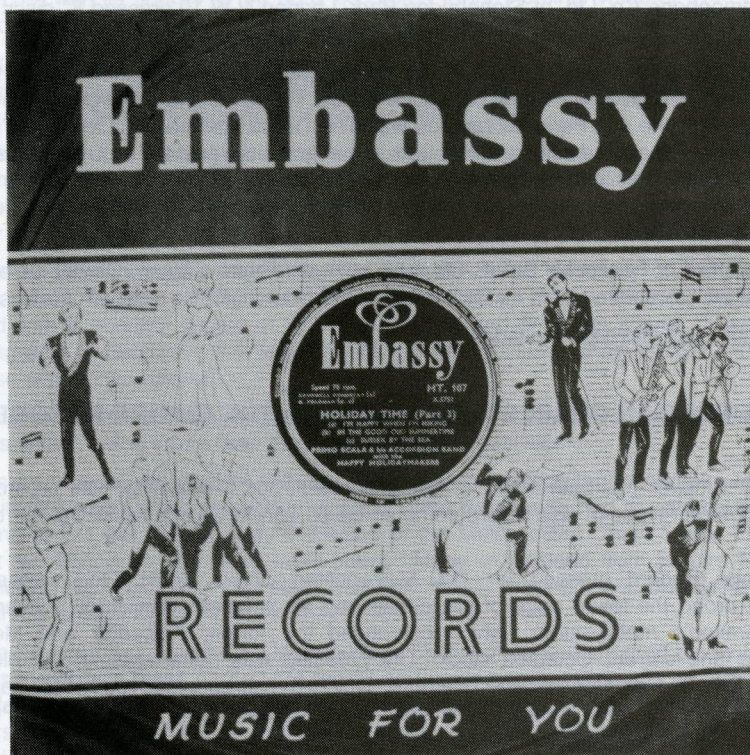
The Embassy needles which Woolworth's sold had no connection with Levy or his Oriole or Embassy discs. Embassy, with reference to gramophone needles, had two trade marks registered by The British Needle Co. Ltd. of Redditch, Worcestershire, dating from 1922 and 1925, and for which I believe Woolworth's had the sole selling licence. The Embassy records were exclusive to Woolworth's only in Britain. Oriole Records Ltd. sold the make to distributors in a few overseas markets.

The Embassy registered trade mark for records was acquired by CBS Records in 1966 and was used by CBS on long-playing vinyl discs sold both in the UK and in overseas markets.



At the time of writing, Woolworth's have recently lost the sole concession for selling the NAXOS CDs of The Pacific Music Co. Ltd. of Hong Kong, which were available from many of their stores and which are still stocked by some of them.

{The Embassy disc played at Neasden was of Primo Scala & His Accordion Band with The Happy Holidaymakers in "Holiday Time" - Part 3 on HT 107}



An Embassy Record in its sleeve

### PEACOCK STORES LTD. - PEACOCK 8" and 10" diameter 1933-1934

I am not able to say whether Peacock Stores Ltd. had more than one store during the period its Peacock records were on sale.

The business was founded by George William Peacock who was trading as the Peacock Textile Company at 359 to 361 Dudley Road, Birmingham when the Peacock trade mark was submitted for registration in November 1927, although Peacock had been using the



mark as early as August 1921. The mark, used on the labels of the discs, was never registered to cover those.

In 1933 the company was re-organised and incorporated as Peacock's Stores Ltd. by which time the head office was at 16 Paradise Street, West Bromwich.

The Peacock records of 1933 and 1934 are to be found in both 8" size and the 10" size with blue labels printed in silver. There were two sources of supply for the 10" size. The British Homophone Co. Ltd. of Stonebridge Park, London N.W.10 pressed 8" discs from its "Plaza" matrices and 10" Peacocks from its "Sterno" matrices.

The 8" Peacocks were given a PS 200 catalogue series, the highest known being PS 272. The 10" size were given a PB 600 catalogue series, PB 637 being the highest known. The other source for the 10" Peacock records was The Decca Record Co. Ltd. which pressed them from its Panachord matrix stock and some from its recently acquired Edison Bell Winner matrices. This catalogue series ran from P 100 to P 199 (the highest known as yet). The Peacocks show all the original matrix numbers as used on the supplying companies own discs.

The head office of Peacock's Stores Ltd. was at Hedel Road, Canton, Cardiff, as at March 1970, and the stores are still in existence today with branches in a number of towns.

{No example was played at Neasden.}

## **METROPOLITAN CHAIN STORES LTD. with THE EMPIRE RECORD 10"** **Diameter**

The word "Empire" has been used in association with one make of cylinder record and at least six different types of disc record of the so-called 78rpm variety, within the UK over the years.

The Empire Record pressed for The Metropolitan Chain Stores Ltd., whose name appeared around the lower edge of the cerise and black labels, was from Synchrophone (1936) Limited's matrix stock, which comprised the former Piccadilly and Metropole recordings and current Octacros stock. The pressing was undertaken at the old Mead Works factory in Gas House Lane, Hertford, which Synchrophone (1936) Ltd. had taken over from Synchrophone Limited and which had formerly been occupied by Piccadilly Records Ltd., Metropole Industries Ltd. and The Metropole Gramophone Co. Ltd.

Metropolitan Chain Stores Ltd. was incorporated in August 1936 with its registered office at 134 Cheapside, in the City of London. Formation was based on the offer of 200,000 shares at 5/- (25p) each to give the nominal capital of £50,000. The whole of the shares were not completely taken up until February 28th 1938, by which time an associated company had been founded in July 1937 called "Metropolitan 3d & 6d Stores Ltd." The objectives of both companies were to establish chains of stores as outlets for various commodities either of their own manufacture or from other suppliers.

Stores were already open in St.John's Road, Clapham, London and at Worcester Park, Surrey by November 1936. A four doors property was opened at Heathway, Dagenham, Essex in March 1937, which later became associated with the 3d & 6d Stores. Other stores opened, in 1937, were at 67/69 Bromley High Street, London S.E.; at 261/265 St.Alban's



Road, Watford, Herts; at 3/4 Grand Parade and 152 High Street, both in Orpington, Kent, and at 5 Cerise Street, Peckham, London S.E.

Bad management, extravagant overhead expenses and a lack of capital, with all reserves and resources exhausted by the opening of new stores, which only operated at a loss, led to a Court granting a compulsory Winding-up Order being issued against the Metropolitan Chain Stores Ltd. in March 1938. The company's debts amounted to £94,033 with assets of only £39, with its shares in the 3d & 6d Stores to the nominal value of £111,250 being declared of "no value".

During the eighteen months in which the Metropolitan Chain Stores were trading their first three directors resigned with four other directors being appointed, and resigning, also. There had also been a replacement of the General Manager.

A month before the Winding-up Order was issued the business had been put under the control of the Metropolitan 3d & 6d Stores Ltd. Some senior officers of the liquidating company were arrested on criminal charges and confined to prison on charges laid by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

During the following legal proceedings, the 3d & 6d Stores company closed most of the stores and, in October 1938, itself resolved to wind up its own affairs. Having being founded with a nominal capital of £1,000,000 in £1 and 5/- (25p) shares, it had, at one point, agreed to purchase the business of the Metropolitan Chain Stores Ltd. but the purchase was not completed.

The Empire records sold by the stores were given an "E" prefixed catalogue series, the matrices shown being those from the supplier's own matrix stock.

There is an unresolved problem with the catalogue numbers in that an Empire record with a label in red, white and blue, with a full Union Jack prominent, had its catalogue numbers beginning at E 1 but did not carry the name of the Metropolitan Chain Stores Ltd. on the label at all. That type of Empire label states "Made in England from Empire Materials". Nevertheless the source of those discs was from former Piccadilly and Metropole matrices. The highest number known to me in that series is E 12.

With the Empire discs, as sold by Metropolitan, I know of none numbered below E 100 and whereas the bulk of these carried the recent and contemporary Octacros recordings, along with a few sides from Piccadilly and Metropole masters, the Empire records with the low numbers appear not to have carried any Octacros recordings and may therefore have been pressed much earlier by Piccadilly Records Ltd. itself at the Hertford factory before Synchrophone Ltd acquired it. E 232, from Octacros masters, is the highest number known to me and was recorded either at the close of 1936 or early in 1937.

The proprietors of the Empire discs with the low "E" numbers remains unknown. A description of Metropolitan Chain Stores' The Empire sleeves is requested.

{Heyken's "The Musical Box" played by a Light orchestra on The Empire E 155 was played at Neasden to end "The Music in Store" programme, a recording made in the summer of 1936 by Ursula Greville, about the only female recording expert around that era.}

**THE END**



# LAMBERT AND EDISON-BELL INDESTRUCTIBLE CYLINDERS IN BRITAIN

by John S. Dales

## Part One

### Introduction

I have read with interest Ray Phillips's article "How Lambert Cylinders Were Made" in the June and August 1991 editions of Hillandale News. The indestructible celluloid cylinders as manufactured by Lambert (Chicago), Edison-Bell and the later Lambert (London) companies certainly, as a group, create confusion amongst collectors today. Hopefully, the following year-by-year account will outline the various types more clearly. This article concerns only cylinder production and is not a history of the various companies involved. Therefore for simplicity, I shall refer to companies as 'Lambert Chicago', 'Edison-Bell', 'Lambert London', etc. The conclusions that I have reached are the result of extensive study of actual cylinder records and surviving catalogues/literature. The various company histories, as written by Frank Andrews, have been of considerable value to me in helping to confirm production dates. Frank Andrews, George Frow, Ernie Bayly, Paul Morby and Richard Scott have, over a period of many years, taken time from their busy working schedules to offer knowledge, advice and the loan of irreplaceable catalogues and rare records. Thank you, gentlemen.

### 1900/1901

The indestructible celluloid cylinders as manufactured by Lambert Chicago were on sale in Britain from around the middle of 1900. Examples that turn up, from time to time, have included the very earliest white celluloid and dyed pink varieties, having internal wedges to guide the record on to the phonograph mandrel. The pink dye, on these early issues, is of a fairly consistent pale colour and has been applied to the external surfaces only, with the exception of the title end. Lambert Chicago cylinders numbered below 100 are seldom found today. The lowest numbered example that I have examined is 3, and is announced "You'll get all that's coming to you, sung for the Lambert Company Chicago". This cylinder is of the white celluloid dyed pink type. The title end has been left white, and on it rubber-stamped in black ink is the catalogue number, title and 'Pat. March 20 1900'.

Lambert Chicago obtained many of their 'master' recordings from outside sources. Unfortunately artists are seldom identified in the spoken announcements during this early period. From the very first issues the catalogue number is found pencilled inside the lead-on end. This was to aid identification during the production process and was to appear on all subsequent issues of both Lambert Chicago and Edison-Bell prior to the introduction of the black celluloid type in 1903. Some early examples have "Lambert Co, Chicago Pat. March 20 1900" rubber-stamped across the playing grooves. Ray Phillips outlines examples of the white and dyed pink types being so treated. Of the few dyed pink types examples that I have examined this wording appears in mauve ink. Titles, although generally stamped in black ink on these early issues, are also found in mauve or green ink. I have never seen examples of the orange coloured type that Ray Phillips described.



The Lambert Chicago celluloid cylinders sold in Britain during this 1900/01 period are almost always found in plain blue or orange with flush cap boxes of a type commonly used by other European suppliers. Without body and lid labels one is unable to establish the possible source of distribution. I have been unable to determine who was responsible for importing and distributing these Lambert Chicago cylinders in Britain at this point in time. Edison-Bell had been importing cylinders from the USA, such as Edison and Columbia waxes, maybe others also. If Edison-Bell did import cylinders from Lambert Chicago then I have not found any contemporary literature to support this. However, I do have some evidence, albeit rather flimsy, that suggests one possible outlet in Britain was Waterfield, Clifford and Company of London. They imported, from Europe, cheap 'Puck' type phonographs to be sold under their 'New Century' trade name. Waterfield, Clifford and Company also bought in cylinders, either as 'masters' or 'duplicates', from other concerns to supplement their own catalogue. The Norcross Phonograph Co. of New York was certainly one source of supply.

## 1902

During the first half of the year Lambert Chicago celluloid cylinders were still, presumably, being offered for sale in Britain. Both Edison and Columbia were making headway with the production of hard wax moulded cylinders. Edison-Bell in London, continued to manufacture their cylinder records, both concert-grand and standard size, in soft brown wax. The new, harder wearing, Edison and Columbia records together with the Lambert Chicago celluloid records must have prompted Edison-Bell into finding an alternative more durable material for their own cylinder records.

**HOW TO GET BEST RESULTS**

From the INDESTRUCTIBLE RECORDS.

---

The public demand for cheap Talking Machines causes "cheap" Talking Machines to be made.

In most of these instruments a glass point is used in the Reproducer instead of a Jewel.

Glass points speedily become worn, their shape becomes changed and they destroy Wax Records very rapidly. When used on the harder material of Indestructible Records the glass points wear out very quickly.

It is therefore economy in every way to have your worthless glass point removed and a Jewel substituted.

Send your Reproducer to any of our agents and have a new sapphire point put in. He will do it for 2/-, and you will speedily find an improvement in the reproduction of all your Records, they will last longer and your sapphire point will not wear out.

If you have any difficulty, post your Reproducer to us, enclose P.O. or stamps value 2/-, and we will fix it up for you.

**Edison-Bell Consolidated Phonograph Company, Ltd.,**  
**and Edisonia, Limited. LONDON.**

(See Over)

1902 Edison-Bell leaflet included with in the Indestructible Cylinder boxes

Quite when and how Edison-Bell became involved with Lambert Chicago remains to be determined. Russell Hunting, who came to England in 1898, was the recording expert with Edison-Bell. No doubt he still had record making contacts in the USA and may have forged the initial business link. Come what may, a business arrangement between Edison-Bell



and Lambert Chicago had developed by the middle of the year. Throughout July Edison-Bell were busy preparing and recording 'master' cylinders in readiness for a bulk shipment to the Lambert Chicago factory. The earliest of these 'masters' found are dated 7th July. On arrival at the Chicago plant these Edison-Bell 'masters' were processed and manufactured as the recently introduced lightweight Messer patent type. Gone however were the internal guide wedges. The new Messer patent type cylinders continued to be made of white celluloid, this time dyed pink over all the external surfaces. The dye colour used varied considerably from shades of pale pink through to a deep reddish pink. Some have a bluish hue that gave the appearance of mauve, or at the extreme, purple.

The Edison-Bell issues are identical in every way to the contemporary Lambert Chicago type. The catalogue number, title, and 'Pat. March 20th 1900' is rubber-stamped in black ink onto the title end of the cylinder. After a time the patent date appears moulded in raised lettering. On close examination of the Edison-Bell issues it is possible to read, on some, abbreviated words and partial dates that have been etched into the surface just after the playing grooves. These words and letters were incised during the 'master' stage. Number 6219, for example, reads as follows: EBCo. Pat. Mch.20.1900 6219E. Sometimes part of a date can be read: 7/7 and 7/25 as examples would be 7th July and 25th July respectively. As an aid to identification Edison-Bell added a suffix 'E' to the catalogue number during the 'master' stage. Lambert Chicago also added the suffix 'E' to the internal pencilled number during the production stage. A few Edison-Bell issues show a suffix 'I'. I have examined too few to be absolutely certain but on those I have that are identified with a suffix 'I', the 'master' is not of Edison-Bell origin. Possibly these 'masters' are of Lambert Chicago origin or from some other USA supplier. Regardless of suffix letter this was not used on the final printing of the catalogue number and was not used by Edison-Bell in their sales literature.

The finished cylinders were returned to Edison-Bell in London who packaged them in a unique type of flush cap box manufactured by Austin & Co. of London. This style of box was used by Edison-Bell until they ceased handling celluloid cylinders. Why Edison-Bell chose this Austin patent box, which is rather fragile, I cannot understand. For many years Edison-Bell cylinders were sold in strong sturdy boxes manufactured for them by the Correganza Company of London.

The Edison-Bell dyed pink indestructibles were on sale in Britain by November 1902, in readiness for the Christmas trade. They were priced at 2/6d (12.5 pence) each. Although a special catalogue was issued the regular series of Edison-Bell numbering was used. The first releases of these cylinders are found to be recorded at a slow speed (approximately 144rpm). The earliest Edison-Bell indestructible cylinders are announced as, for example: "Popular Comic Song 'I'm The Plumber' sung by Harry Bluff, Edison Bell Record." Another type of announcement was as follows: "Waltz, 'Tres Jolie', played by the London Regimental Band, Indestructible Record." Cylinders announced as the aforementioned examples were short lived and are seldom found today. They were soon replaced by the more familiar spoken announcement, a combination of the above, as for example: "Always Be A Man, sung by Mr Eric Farr, Edison-Bell Indestructible Record." This style of announcement continued throughout the remainder of the pink production period.

Edison-Bell also supplied Lambert Chicago with selected 'master' cylinders to supplement Lambert's own catalogue. In fact from around this time to the end of Lambert Chicago's production the vast majority of band, orchestral and instrumental selections as shown in their catalogues are of Edison-Bell origin: such as the London Regimental Band, London



Concert Orchestra, Bohemian Band and the banjoist Olly Oakley. The band and orchestral selections are announced by the unmistakable voice of Russell Hunting. Most cylinders for Lambert Chicago's use were announced as "Lambert Record" although some crept into the Lambert catalogues with Edison-Bell spoken announcements.

Perhaps it is worth a mention at this point that 'International' of Liverpool, England was manufacturing a black celluloid indestructible cylinder during 1902. A detailed history of this company by Frank Andrews was published in 'Talking Machine Review' numbers 30, 31 and 34 of October and December 1974 and June 1975 respectively.

NOVEMBER 1902

# A RECORD

*Price*

$\frac{2}{6}$

*Each*



*Sample*

$\frac{2}{4}$

*By Post*

**FOR PHONOGRAPHS AND OTHER TALKING MACHINES.**

SEND FOR FULL RECORD LIST - OVER 2000 SELECTIONS.

**PLEASE REMEMBER THE EDISON BELL PHONOGRAPHS ARE THE BEST.**

Reverse of 1902 Edison-Bell leaflet

## 1903

During the first few months of the year Edison-Bell continued the arrangement of supplying Lambert Chicago with wax 'master' cylinders for processing as dyed pink indestructibles. As before these 'masters' were prepared for eventual use by both Edison-Bell and Lambert Chicago. However Edison-Bell 'masters' despatched to Lambert Chicago now included those of the Concert-Grand 5" size. Rather strange as it may seem these 'masters' were for Lambert Chicago use only. Edison-Bell had mentioned the possibility of supplying the British trade with this size; however this never came to pass. As with some of the standard size a few of the Lambert Chicago 5" size are found to have Edison-Bell announcements. None were ever allocated Edison-Bell catalogue numbers. Some have surfaced in Britain, usually housed in Edison-Bell boxes. These were not on general sale and may have been to test the market. Sometimes the standard size Lambert Chicago indestructibles, of the Messer Patent type also turned up in Britain. These are few and far between compared with the regular Edison-Bell type. I have noted on some of the later Lambert Chicago dyed pink type a series of numbers that appear etched into the surface after the playing grooves. Examples of these are: 632003, 741703 and 172303. These numbers I have interpreted as being: master cylinder 6 20th March 1903, master cylinder 7 17th April 1903 and master cylinder 1 23rd July 1903 respectively. Would any USA researcher care to



comment?

Initial sales of the Edison-Bell pink type indestructibles proved very promising, so much so that Edison-Bell installed their own manufacturing plant at the Gower Street Works. By April 1903 Edison-Bell were in full production and supplies of the pink indestructibles from Lambert Chicago ceased.

The new Edison-Bell indestructible cylinders were made entirely of brown celluloid and processed from 'masters', the earliest of which I have located dating back to November 1902. Lambert Chicago also at around this time replaced their pink indestructibles with an all brown version. Very, very few of the Lambert brown type have surfaced in Britain. Close scrutiny of the Edison-Bell and Lambert Chicago brown (and later black) indestructibles reveal various detail differences. It becomes apparent that they are no longer from the same stable. If anything the Edison-Bell products are a little thinner and consequently more brittle than their Lambert Chicago counterparts.

The Edison-Bell brown types have "Edison-Bell Indestructible Record" moulded in raised lettering on the lead-on end of the cylinder. The title ends have "patented" moulded, also in raised lettering; titles, at first without catalogue numbers, were rubber stamped in black ink. Sometimes the catalogue number (or other numbers) and a date are found etched into the surface after the playing grooves. Spoken announcements no longer included "indestructible" and are simplified by the title and artist followed by the familiar "Edison-Bell Record".

The Edison-Bell brown indestructibles were short lived. Although not great rarities they are scarce to find in comparison to the pink and black types. Maybe it was thought that the public might associate the brown colour with the cheaper brown waxes.

By July 1903 the Edison-Bell indestructibles were being manufactured in, and entirely of, black celluloid from masters dating back to April 1903. They were advertised as: 'Black as ebony, durable as ebony, shines like ebony and wears like ebony'. The price had by now been reduced to 2/- (10 pence) each.

As a matter of interest Edison-Bell did not produce their black wax moulded cylinders until several months later. Lambert Chicago indestructibles also came to be produced in black celluloid. This was, according to Allen Koenigsberg in the Ray Phillips article, October 1903.

The Edison-Bell black type have "Edison-Bell Indestructible Record" and 'patented' moulded in raised lettering on the lead-on end of the cylinders. Title ends have the catalogue number, title and artist all moulded in raised lettering. Again, as with most of the previous issues, words and letters may be found etched into the surface after the playing grooves. These often include a date, in the American fashion, the catalogue number and a letter, presumably the 'master' take. Spoken announcements, as with the brown issues, include the title and artist followed by "Edison-Bell Record". The box label, as illustrated in Ray Phillips's article, was of a green and brown colour and remained the same design since the first Edison-Bell pink issues. By November 1903 the box label had changed to a black and white colour having a lion rampant incorporated into the design and styled 'The New Ebony record'.

Within a year of starting production Edison-Bell had found that their indestructibles were not only brittle but were also prone to a more serious defect - shrinkage. This resulted in:

- \* The cylinder warping causing the reproducer to jump.



- \* The grooves running out of pitch causing the stylus to mis-track.
- \* Failure of the cylinder to fully mount the mandrel.

The problem of shrinkage from cylinders made from celluloid was by no means new. Way back in the 1890s the celluloid pioneer, Henri Lioret, had mounted his cylinders onto a metal former. 'International' of Liverpool had encountered the same difficulties with their black celluloid cylinders. By the autumn of 1903 'International' were manufacturing indestructible cylinders that included a plaster-of-Paris core with metal support rings at either end. The new reinforced 'Internationals' were sturdy and robust and were to remain far superior to any other celluloid indestructibles in the pre-Blue Amberol days. To overcome the problem of shrinkage Edison-Bell, by late 1903, also included a plaster lining but no metal supporting rings. These Edison-Bell lined indestructibles were not at first very successful. They couldn't get it quite right. Initial batches of lined cylinders show the plaster core to be lumpy and full of air holes. Eventually matters improved. Apparently Edison-Bell plaster-lined their indestructibles from stock that had been previously manufactured. Not only are examples of the black type treated in this way, but even the earlier pink and brown types turn up from time to time having a similar plaster core. The shrinkage problem and the added production costs must have certainly created anxieties for the Edison-Bell manufacturing department. Presumably sales figures had dropped dramatically as examples of the later type lined cylinders are found infrequently. One can safely assume that Edison-Bell staff had been planning the introduction of a hard wax moulded cylinder record for some months previously.

#### 1904

At the beginning of the year sales of the Edison-Bell indestructibles had slumped to a very low level. Happily for Edison-Bell their alternative soft brown wax 'popular' cylinders were selling well. This is rather surprising when they were up against the hard wax moulded cylinders of their competitors, particularly Edison and Columbia. Perhaps the lower price of the 'populars' accounted for this.

In February Edison-Bell opened their new Glengall Road factory for the production of black wax moulded cylinders. The Gower Street factory continued with the existing range of cylinder records, including the indestructibles. By April production of the moulded black wax cylinders was in full sway. Manufacture of the indestructibles ceased almost immediately. However indestructible cylinder production in Britain was by no means over. It was at this point in time that the Lambert Company, London was formed to carry on with the production of indestructible celluloid cylinders. I shall attempt to outline these in a future article in Hillandale News together with a production comparison chart.

It took many months for Edison-Bell to rid themselves of their vast stocks of indestructibles. By September 1904 they were advertised, in all colours, at 1/3d (6.25 pence) each. No longer was there gushing sales talk. The indestructibles were simply referred to as 'unbreakable records'.

#### 1905

The Edison-Bell 'unbreakable records' were still being advertised as late as March. A special catalogue was available offering all colour varieties. Prices were yet again further reduced to 1/- (5 pence) each.

On the conclusion of part 1 of this article, may I ask our American readers the following



questions:

- (1) Did the Lambert Chicago Company purchase the bulk , if not all, of their cylinders from outside sources?
- (2) Was the Lambert Chicago Company still manufacturing indestructibles and adding fresh titles to their lists until late 1905?

**To be continued**

# **The**


# **Clockwork Music Group**

We have again been able to reserve the activities room at the Science Museum in Blandford Street, Newcastle, for our group meetings this year by courtesy of the staff. As usual the meetings are arranged for Saturday afternoons between 2 pm and 4 pm approximately.

The programme for 1992 may appear similar to that of 1991 but I can assure you that the contents are different but certainly not new (as in recent!).

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>11 July</b>      | I hope you won't be all on holiday by then as we hope to persuade DAVID TRIGG to present a vintage film show |
| <b>12 September</b> | An audio visual presentation by FRED HAY on the development of the talking machine                           |
| <b>12 December</b>  | Another thrill in the dark, our almost traditional magic lantern show, presented by DEREK GREENACRE          |

We hope the dates are convenient and that you come along.



# THE RECORDINGS OF POPE LEO XIII

by Earl Mathewson

I was privileged to own one of the discs produced by Bettini, that I assume was dubbed from the cylinders which he had recorded of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII aged 93. With it came a superior 8 page booklet. I make some notes below from the text:

POPE LEO XIII was recorded in the Vatican on Thursday 5th February 1903

The 3rd March 1903 was the 25th anniversary of his enthronement. He was born on 2nd March 1810 at Carpineto (diocese of Anagni), Italy. His election was on 20th February 1878.

"Le soussigné, s'étant trouvé présent, déclare que M. Bettini, directeur de la Société des Micro-Phonographes de Paris, a eu l'honneur, le 5 Février 1903, d'enregistrer dans une de ses machines l'Ave Maria et de la Bénédiction apostolique dits par Sa Sainteté Leon XIII.

Rome, 7 Février 1903 (signé) Comte Camillo Pecci"

The name of the Pope was Gioacchino Pecci

Two phonogrammes were recorded:

## **Phonogramme A: La Bénédiction**

Le Saint-Père      Sit nomen Domini benedictum

choeurs            Et hoc nunc et usque saeculum

Le Saint-Père      Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Dei

choeurs            Qui fecit coelum et terram

Le Saint-Père      Benedicat vos omnipotens Deus, Pater, Filius et Spiritus Sanctus

choeurs            Amen

The responses were spoken by high-dignitaries present in the household of the Pope.

## **Phonogramme B: L'Ave Maria**

Le Saint-Père a récité l'Ave Maria dans la pensée que les fidèles répéteront avec lui cette prière.

## **NOTICE**

The phonogrammes of the Holy Father must conserve their essentially religious character - and are not intended for public audition in the nature of spectacle without special permission. Consequently each purchaser must sign a declaration to this effect.

## **Comments by Ernie Bayly and Earl Mathewson**

M. Bettini also produced the recordings as 24.5cm (approx. diameter) discs, which had labels with pinky-red printing upon white paper. Details were scribed into the master wax. For our illustration Mr Mathewson has rubbed white chalk into the letters outside the label.



The back of the single-sided discs carry the legend "Made in England" .....but by whom?

These were also issued on Columbia. The "Ave Maria" was reproduced on Gotham LP "History Speaks" Vol.2 which had short availability here (and possibly elsewhere).

The 8-page booklet includes pictures of Pope Leo XIII giving Benediction on the occasion of his 25th Jubilee on 3rd March 1903 by F. Laszlo and one of the Pope at prayer by Th. Chartan.



The front cover of the booklet accompanying the Bettini recordings of Pope Leo XIII



## LETTERS

### Queen Victoria's Voice

Dear Editor,

As I hoped, publication of my book "The Lost Voice of Queen Victoria" has brought forth new ideas, theories and information relevant to the authenticity - or otherwise - of the early Graphophone cylinder donated to the Science Museum in 1929 by Esmond Morse, whose father Sydney recorded Queen Victoria on a Graphophone in 1888. My thanks to the several members of the C.L.P.G.S. who have contacted me with their views. An interesting dichotomy of opinions seems to be developing around the question of whether or not it would have been possible for a treadle-driven Graphophone to have sustained a speed of 130 to 140 r.p.m., which - to my ears - seems to be the speed at which the cylinder was recorded.

On the one hand, there are those who maintain that only an electrically powered Graphophone could have steadily maintained this speed. To the best of my knowledge, Henry Edmunds and Sydney Morse promoted only the treadle-operated model. Henry, in his own descriptions, specifically said "there is no electricity". Therefore, if the Science Museum's cylinder could only have been recorded on an electric Graphophone, then this is evidence **against** the cylinder being the one on which Morse recorded Queen Victoria's voice.

On the other hand there is the view that a treadle Graphophone's gears and governor could have been adjusted in such a way that, inadvertently or deliberately, the machine used at Balmoral **would** have recorded at 140 r.p.m.

I wonder if any members could help me arrange a practical experiment to test these

theories? The obvious thing to do would be to run an 1888 electric Graphophone and an 1888 treadle Graphophone and measure the sustainable recording speeds of the two machines. However, I understand that there are no longer any of these machines in existence - or at least, readily accessible to experimenters. Perhaps, therefore, an alternative test would be to take a treadle sewing machine of the period, somehow simulate the mechanical linkage that connected it to a Graphophone, and then drive the machine and measure or calculate the speed at which it could rotate a mandrel?

If a steady 140 r.p.m. could be sustained, then we cannot rule out the possibility that the voice on the cylinder is that of Queen Victoria.

If an original or replica hand-driven Graphophone is available anywhere, perhaps someone with the necessary engineering ability could link it to an 1888 treadle sewing machine? We could then attempt to make a recording - or if that is not possible, measure the mandrel speed. That type of experiment, though, may involve putting even the most dedicated phonograph enthusiast to too much expense and trouble.

Anyone who would like to help me arrange an experiment can contact me at [REDACTED] Loose, Maidstone, Kent ME15 0AY, Tel: [REDACTED]

I hope eventually to publish a sequel to "The Lost Voice of Queen Victoria", in which I will include all the latest findings and theories. Meanwhile, in "The Godfather of Rolls-Royce", my biography of Henry Edmunds, which is due out this summer, I will be publishing something that I obtained only recently - a transcript of an eye witness (or perhaps I should say 'ear witness'), who was present at the 'Royal recording session' in 1888. This account gives the precise date of the event.

I am grateful to Colin Johnson and Joe



Pengelly for reviewing my book in Hillandale News No.185, and I should like to answer some criticism that Peter Adamson quite rightly made in his letter "That voice again". The use of the word "must" instead of "can" on page 101 was an error on my part, induced by ear fatigue and other factors when I was finishing the book. I hear the word "can", as do most others to whom I have played the NSA's dubbing.

Yours sincerely, Paul Tritton, Loose, Kent

### **Peter Copeland replies**

Dear Editor,

I should like to comment upon Joe Pengelly's review of "The Lost Voice of Queen Victoria" in the April Hillandale News (page 21). In the course of this review, Joe accuses the National Sound Archive of "allowing a valuable and perhaps unique cylinder recording to be damaged on a number of occasions before its very eyes." Had this been true, I should indeed deserve the castigation; but I am pleased to say the reports are much exaggerated, and possibly based on a misunderstanding for which I am partly responsible. As many of your readers are taxpayers who pay my salary, I hope, Mr. Editor, you will allow me to explain further.

Firstly, however, I should like to make two background points which Mr. Pengelly seems unaware of. I work for the National SOUND Archive, not the National ARTI-FACT Archive. Our duty is to preserve the sounds, not the media they are stored on. It is of course true that a large collection of artifacts is needed to understand topics such as recording and reproduction processes, marketing methods, and discographical techniques; but all these must be subservient to preserving the SOUND. Given the choice between a rare G&T in

fine condition and a modern vinyl pressing from its original stamper, I would much prefer the latter. If you want a collection of artifacts, you should go to a museum, not a sound archive. In fact, the "Queen Victoria" cylinder belongs to the Science Museum; and, as made clear in Paul Tritton's book, it was there because of its importance as an artifact, not because it might contain the Queen.

Secondly, Joe implies that I was unconscious of its possible importance as an historic artifact. This was far from the case. Quite apart from that, I was also horribly aware that it was not our property! If you listen to the complete session tape of 11th June 1991 (which anyone can do by asking for NSA Tape Number O.438BW), it will at once be apparent that we were feeling our way so as to minimise any potential damage.

Now to the actual transfer session of 11th June. This was called to establish whether the recorded content could prove or disprove whether this was the Queen Victoria cylinder. In the three weeks preceding the session, I made determined efforts to locate another contemporary Graphophone cylinder which might be more expendable, so we could learn about stylus sizes and playing-weights with something less hair-raising. This was unsuccessful. I also attempted to contact anyone who had transcribed Graphophone cylinders electrically, mostly in North America, but again without success. Contrary to Joe's assertion, I did investigate the possibility of laser playback; but there were at least three reasons why I decided against it. The first, as described on page 81 of Paul Tritton's book, was that the owners (the Science Museum) did not want the cylinder to leave the country. Second, all the Japanese equipment was designed for playing Edison-type cylinders, and it would have meant at least two trips to Japan to get the equipment set up. (We could not have specified what we wanted to the



Japanese in advance, because the cylinder had shrunk; it was fully a sixteenth of an inch too small to fit on the Science Museum's replica Graphophone, for example.) Third, although people have continued to develop laser playing methods, they still have not got a system which gives a lower background noise than stylus techniques. We are dealing here with a recording which is almost unbelievably faint; it is nearly thirty decibels quieter than any other acoustic recording I know, so to play it on a machine with higher background noise would have undermined the reason for playing it in the first place - to see if it WAS the Queen. Now I must admit that I have not been keeping up with the flurry of papers which researchers have been generating lately, but I have sat back in the certain knowledge that as soon as a viable system was developed, it would be trumpeted and exploited commercially. My faith in the competitive marketplace is such that this will probably be BEFORE it could give lower background noise! Yet, significantly, even this has not happened.

On 11th June, we started by playing the cylinder using a large-tipped stylus with an extremely light playing-weight and a slow rotational speed, so as to minimize any damage. All the passes were taken onto tape, so that if we DID commit irreparable damage at any stage, we could use a previous version. We stopped and listened to each pass back from the tape each time to avoid playing the cylinder unnecessarily, so we could come to a consensus about what to do next. This was how we decided upon the directions and speeds of rotation. My guests made judgements about the recorded content. I tried to keep out of this, since I did not wish to be caught in the position of having to justify my assertions by wearing out the cylinder! But it was soon clear that "Band Two" contained the female voice, and from then on we always started a new pass using Bands One or Three, so a

new stylus or playing-speed would not hazard the female voice. All this is documented (in boring detail, I am told) on Tape O.438BW.

Eventually, we reached the stage where we were using the 1 thou spherical stylus, giving a marked improvement over anything achieved previously. It was at this point that I observed some "fine brown dust" accumulating round the stylus, and this was the expression I used on the session-tape. There was considerable disappointment from my visitors when I advised halting the work, especially since it seemed that even better results were possible with other styli; but, after some discussion, I concluded that the damage was minimal. This assertion was based on the fact that the dust was extremely fine - probably between 0.1 and 1 micron particle-size, and in extremely small quantities (the stylus was always visible). The dust was evidently taken from the middle of the bottom of the groove, so there was plenty of groove remaining untouched which could subsequently be tracked with a larger or truncated tip if necessary. It accumulated evenly during the playing of a band, not from one particular section of the cylinder. In my experience, this would have affected the noise level by about 0.1dB at worst, while the fidelity brought by the improved contact was considerably greater than that.

So we decided to halt further experiments, play Band 2 once with the 1-thou stylus, and send the result to CEDAR to see what they could do with it. We hoped the publicity and circulation of cleaned-up copies would establish what the recorded content was. Our idea was that work might resume if it proved to be the Queen. Paul Tritton has now received several extra pieces of information to fill gaps in the story, but still maintains (correctly, in my view) that the question remains undecided. In the meantime I said, and I still believe, that we did all we could without significantly damaging the



cylinder. And we played it only once under these conditions, not "on a number of occasions" as Joe Pengelly puts it.

It is also my personal view that this brown dust (which was quite distinctly different from the black of the cylinder) might merely have been a coating of urban smog and grime, and that by scraping it off, we were actually improving matters. We do know that, for nearly forty years, the cylinder was apparently unprotected. Our usual washing techniques cannot be applied to a card-board-based cylinder. Alternatively, it might be an outer "skin" of dried-up ozokerite. Paul Tritton's book uses the words "small particles of ozokerite," which in retrospect was perhaps an alarmist phrase. To the uninitiated, it might suggest we dug out lumps the size of breadcrumbs. Although Paul submitted a draft of his text to me for correction, I took the view that this phrase underlined the reasons why the work had to stop very effectively, and I did not change it. I'm sorry if anyone thought I was committing vandalism; but I suppose it all depends what you mean by "particles."

If I may, Mr. Editor, I should like to place on record what has been achieved so far, and what could be done in the future if it does turn out to be the Queen.

First, a point of overall strategy. History has shown that wax cylinders have a habit of degrading faster than the technology evolves to recover the sound. There are many examples of this, but one familiar to your readers might be the Mapleson cylinders. The general consensus is that the ones transferred in the 1930s sound better than those done in the 1980s, even though pickups of the 1930s caused more wear. If this is true of waxes made in 1902, how much more likely it is to be of media made in 1888! I profoundly believe we should attempt to recover historic sound NOW, rather than wait for future developments.

I must place my cards on the table and say

that, if it WAS Queen Victoria and the cylinder belonged to the NSA (or, indeed, if it were my personal property), I should not hesitate to risk the entire artifact if I was confident I could get all the sound off it. I know this is an extreme view, which is unlikely to be shared by the Science Museum! Fortunately, such a "kill or cure" technique may not be necessary. I should first try to find money to finance an attempt at laser playback. We have already spent a substantial four-figure sum on this project, and we would need even more if we were to go to Japan. Before I could justify this, we would need more substantial evidence that it IS the Queen. Even if this were agreed, the optical experts would have to convince me that they could improve the unweighted signal-to-noise ratio we have already achieved. But if the job were better done with styli, I would advocate a 2-thou and/or 2.5 thou spherical tip. We now know the recording lacks the high stylus accelerations which justify an elliptical tip, and the spherical would allow both increased playing weight and decreased noise at the same time. In my professional opinion, we might gain a further 6dB reduction in the background-noise, but not much more. Our present experience of graphophone cylinders - one! means I could not guarantee the recording would remain completely undamaged.

A final point demands a comment from me. Joe Pengelly says "the replay machinery used by the National Sound Archive is hardly 'state of the art', lacking as it does both facilities and sophistication." I assume we are talking about the same equipment here, namely the machine built by former NSA engineer Lloyd Stickells in 1983. With easily-understood mechanical adjustments, this can play any cylinder of any size, speed, or direction of tracking, with any sized stylus. It is true the stylus pressure can't be altered during playback, but we are about to have that added. Even more



important, all these media are played with the same pickup mounted in a properly-designed mechanism and connected to properly-calibrated electronics; thus the electromechanical performance is easily checked, and is not subject to the uncalibrated variations which would occur if moved from one mechanism to another. Most important of all, the vital parameters (bandwidth, self-generated noise, distortion and speed variation) are each an order of magnitude less than those of the media we have played on it so far. The machine LOOKS like a lash-up, I agree; but what else do we actually NEED?

Yours sincerely, Peter Copeland,  
Conservation Manager, National Sound Archive

## The Science Museum replies

Dear Mr Hamilton,

As the curator at the Science Museum responsible for agreeing to the assistance and approach of Peter Copeland of the National Sound Archive in playing the bell-Tainter Graphophone cylinder on their apparatus (for which an additional tailor-made mandrel was fabricated for the purpose by craftsmen in our engineering workshop here) I want fully and unhesitatingly to endorse his response to Joe Pengelly's criticisms of these actions in his review of 'The Lost Voice of Queen Victoria' (April, pp21-2). Not only has there been no very significant loss to the object and our knowledge of it as a result of Paul Tritton's research and Peter Copeland's ingenuity and skill, rather in contrast as a result of the attendant publicity for the small exhibition and the book, new contacts and sources have come to our knowledge, attention has been drawn to the Science Museum's large unseen sound reproduction collection, and an already fruitful collaboration with the National Sound Archive has been further

cemented.

Yours sincerely, Dr Derek Robinson,  
Head Science Group Collections Division,  
National Museum of Science and Industry,

## Ariel Records

Dear Chris,

Readers enjoying (as I am) Frank Andrews' series of articles on "Records in Store" may be interested in the following details of some Ariel records:

Ariel K 9015

a) Harry Trevor (baritone) singing "For Auld Lang Syne" accompanied by the Beka London Orchestra. (40182 c.1907)

b) The Ariel London Military Band playing "The Uhlan's Call". (40593 c.1909)

I assume the second side was actually made by the Beka London Orchestra, which did record martial music. An uhlan was a light cavalryman.

Ariel 407

a) "Dear Dream Rose of Mine" (Yy 2298-1 r. 20/12/22)

b) "Joyce" (Yy 3464-2 r. 19/9/23)

These sides issued on Zonophone 2323 and 2385 respectively as by 'The Grosvenor Dance Orchestra' were actually made by Jack Hylton and His Orchestra. On Ariel they were disguised by the collective 'Ariel Dance Orchestra' pseudonym.

Ariel 857

a) Annie Rees (soprano) as 'Gladys Brown' and Violet Oppenshaw (contralto) singing Offenbach's "Barcarolle" (Ak 16904e r. August 1913). This was originally issued on Zonophone 1161



b) Sydney Coltham (tenor) as 'Ivor Tayelor' singing "I know of Two Bright Eyes" (Ak 17430e r. 30/1/14). This originally appeared on Zonophone 1264.

Ariel 1100

Esther Coleman (contralto) as 'Annette Crosby' singing "Ora Pro Nobis" (matrix Yy 13170-1? r. 11/4/28) and Gounod's "Ave Maria" (matrix YR 1898-1 r. 16/5/28)

Ariel Z 4771

The Dajos Bela Dance Orchestra as 'The Ariel Dance Orchestra' playing "You Brought Me Love" (Qu 329) and "You've Never Been Loved Before" (Qu330) both recorded in 1930. The second side appeared on Parlophone R 1109.

Ariel Z 4877

a) "The Prize Waltz" (W 15267-2 r. New York 28/6/34) played by Ben Selvin and His Orchestra with vocalist Howard Phillips.

b) "Isle of Capri" (CE 6621-1 r. London August 1934) played by Leslie Jeffries and His Grand Hotel (Eastbourne) Orchestra with unidentified male vocalist.

Credited to 'The Ariel Dance Orchestra' they clearly originated on Columbia and Parlophone respectively and may well have been issued here on those labels.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Cliffe, Hitchin, Hertfordshire

## Plus ça change

Dear Editor,

I wonder whether readers of "Hillandale News" would be interested in this article which appeared in a monthly magazine called "The Captain". This was aimed at teenage boys and this issue was published in October 1922:

"New Uses for the Gramophone

It has been suggested that gramophones might be used to guard a house while the

owners are away, provided that the house be on the telephone. The idea is to have a record made which announces the address of the house and that a burglary is being committed; and to set the machine, with record in place, close to the telephone. If a window or door be opened, electric switches start up the gramophone and ring up the exchange, which promptly informs the police of what the gramophone is saying; and it is up to them to do the rest.

The scheme is quite feasible, and I don't think it shows as much originality as an actual apparatus that makes use of telephone and gramophone combined. The apparatus in question is employed to give information as to the level of water in a reservoir, which may be miles away from the point of inquiry. At the reservoir a gramophone with a record, which instead of having a continuous spiral groove, has 200 concentric circular grooves, each of which is 'vocalised' to call out a certain number. The swinging arm carrying the sound-box and needle is connected with a float by a cord which moves it across the record as the water level rises or sinks. Ringing up the gramophone automatically sets it moving and lowers the needle on to the record, whereupon a number is shouted at a telephone receiver. If the caller-up hears "Eighty-five!" "Eighty-five!" "Eighty-five!" again and again, he knows that the reservoir is 85 per cent full. When he 'hangs up' his receiver the machine stops, and the needle is raised clear. I have tested this instrument and found that it works admirably.

A. Williams"

Best wishes, Roy Carter, Long Melford, Suffolk

{Examples of both these machines were on view at the Edison Centenary Exhibition in Edinburgh in 1977. The latter machine is illustrated in the Exhibition's catalogue. Ed.}



## REPORTS

### London Meeting, February 19th 1992

Len Watts, whose programme entitled "Records That Give Me Pleasure" certainly gave the audience a great deal of pleasure. The "Adolph March" composed by Michaelis, was first heard and liked by Len as a schoolboy and he had found copies of the record in both Aberdeen and Birmingham. "Oh! You Silvery Bells" we were told was a copy of a cylinder, which was owned by one of Len's friends.

A Pathé recording of a piece composed by Gabriel Parès, a one time director of the Garde Républicaine Band, entitled "The Bombardier" was followed by Lilian Bryant playing "Cupid's Garden" composed by Max Eugene. Lilian, who was George Baker's first wife, went on to make Regal records, as a pianist, some of them electrically.

An Edwardian song, "Riding on Top of The Car", reminded the audience of a pleasant form of transport.

Ballet music from Saint-Saëns' opera "Henry 8th", showed how ballet had become part of opera by the end of last century. The music had also been used in a "Toytown" episode, to depict the Magician.

Peter Dawson's rendition of "Hotel Pimlico", which was a song from a revue of the twenties, was up to his usual standard.

The programme ended with a delightful recording of the "Rubinstein" Twostep, played on the Popper "Claribella" orchestra which is part of the collection in the Brentford Musical Museum.

Once again Len, a marvellous evening.

Geoff Edwards

### London Meeting, March 19th 1992

The less tricky bits of modern history can often be explained by an aural or visual recording, and much of today's radio and television news output consists of nothing else. But this was not always so and some news and documentary offerings were commissioned and prepared by record manufacturers of the time. In the third part of his talk on "The Gramophone Record as an Historic Document" Chris Hamilton introduced us to the crisis and war war-beset decade from 1936, illustrated from these classes of recordings with a few unusual and very rare examples.

The big British companies would have nothing to do with the 1936 Abdication of King Edward VIII, but several of the small ones as well as foreign firms issued versions on about a dozen labels, all recorded from the radio, and the Japanese Columbia that we heard (J 5950) showed some interesting short-wave fading.

Speeches during the 1938 Crisis that led Britain and France into war with Germany in the next year made up the first of the Decca World War 16-record series. and it (K 926) could have been the earliest news documentary record made in this country for public sale. There next followed King George VI's Broadcast to His Peoples on September 3rd 1939 (HMV RB 8969) and the Decca (SP 35) of Charles Gardner's description of an air battle over the English Channel in July 1940 just when the Blitzkrieg on south east England was starting. Events in France after Dunkirk led to the issue of a Pathé-Marconi record of speeches by Marshall Pétain; his co-operation with Hitler brought him to trial and disgrace after the war.

On December 8th 1941, following Pearl Harbour, the world heard President Roosevelt's Address to Congress of "a day that will live in infamy" (Victor 27734/HMV B



9262) but the disconsolate Neville Chamberlain's solemn declaration of War in 1939 was never made available in full to record buyers. Having issued his Munich speeches earlier (HMV C 3031), this was a puzzling omission.

National Security requirements brought the issue of a number of HMV Special Records and on one example an unlikely combining of Syd ("Rags, Bottles or Bones") Walker, Patricia Burke and Cyril ("I'm one of the Whitehall Warriors") Ritchard showed up the folly of Careless Talk in the Royal Air Force. Two further R.A.F. sides include a few words from Air Chief Marshall ("Bomber") Arthur Harris and cockpit conversations during a night raid over Essen (HMV RAF 11). There were also Special Records to promote National savings, usually of a cheerful martial flavour. -

The Germans too used records for service training, and on an almost claustrophobic Telefunken (T 5154) of sounds in a U-boat, torpedoes could be heard being fired by compressed air, followed by counter-measures from depth-charging warships above; their whirring propellers could be heard clearly. It was thought that these on-the-spot sounds may well have been collected on an early tape recorder. The evening concluded with Charlie and His Friends, a specially-assembled German dance band of the day playing popular American and British tunes with newly-fitted words for beaming propaganda to Allied forces. At least the orchestration and playing were impeccable.

Most of the records that were played had their labels and available covers projected on the screen. It has been said that since our meetings have moved to South Kensington their standard has risen noticeably. Of this there is no doubt, borne out by Chris Hamilton's unusual and most enjoyable evening.

A London Correspondent

## **Midlands Group Meeting at Carr's Lane Methodist Centre at 7.30pm on 21st March 1992.**

Chairman Eddie Dunn welcomed two new members to our group. He pointed out that he is now a committee member on the London "Head Office" of the Society and therefore in a position to represent the interests of our branch.

Secretary Phil Bennett advised that we have again been invited to stage a two-day exhibition at the annual Dudley Show to be held at Himley Hall near Dudley on August 1st and 2nd. More of this in due course.

The date of our next meeting at Carr's Lane will be May 16th when Jerry Lee will give a programme entitled "New Tenors for Old".

This evening's programme was given by Phil Bennett and was devoted to the history of two of the white bands in America in the 1920s known to collectors as exponents of jazz and 'hot' dance music. They were the Benson Orchestra of Chicago and the Virginians (1921-1928). A detailed history of the origins and development of these fine ensembles was liberally laced with original 78s from Victor and HMV.

The Benson Orchestra was almost completely changed in 1923 with the famous Frankie Trumbauer (C melody saxophone) and Don Bestor (piano) coming into the line-up. The Virginians were in effect a small section of the full Paul Whiteman Orchestra. After the cessation of this band (which only existed for recording) the name was used again by Victor for further issues by its House Band.

Even the 'non-jazz' members present found something from the records in the quality and skill of these two orchestras.

Thanks Phil for a tuneful and well researched programme.

Geoff Howl



## **Severn Vale Group, Meeting on February 16th 1992**

To see Mike Appleton's collection is like stepping into the pages of both of George Frow's books. Probably nowhere else outside the USA is the Edison line so well represented, as the twenty-plus society members who attended this special outing to Mike's home can attest.

Mike has spent over twenty years patiently collecting as many different types of Edison machines as he can find, along with a comprehensive selection of ephemera, artifacts and curios. The collection is well laid out. The first room is given over to horned and electric machines, along with the obligatory tinfoil. It is in here that a collector can compare a Model C Home with a Model D Home, and as very few of these ever reached the UK, it is probably one of the few places where we can do this.

The next room is the "Amberola Room". From the original Lyre-grilled A1 to the 75

each type is represented with the odd variation thrown in. The next two rooms are dominated by that hybrid of Orange, the Diamond Disc. Again many of the early styles were not available in Britain and very few, if any, are represented outside the USA. Many of us enjoyed comparing the sound quality of the early table models with that of the later Edisonics. Others enjoyed the LP machines.

We spent a couple of hours savouring these machines before retiring to the lounge for tea and sandwiches. Mike told us that half of the fun of owning a collection was being able to share it with others, a gesture we all appreciated. We then watched a selection of videos made by APM in America.

Non-Edisons are relegated to the lounge - but what machines: a Trade Mark model and an HMV Automatic 1!

Many thanks to Mike and Lulu for entertaining us and for their generous hospitality.

George Glastris

## **Forthcoming Meetings in London**

London Meetings are held at The National Sound Archive, 29, Exhibition Road, Kensington, on the third Thursday evening of the month promptly at **6.45pm** (unless noted otherwise).

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>June 18th</b>      | "A Chip Off The Old Block", a programme on Music Hall families presented by Rick Hardy |
| <b>July 16th</b>      | To be announced. Presented by Dominic Combes   |
| <b>August 20th</b>    | "Introducing the 30" with George Woolford  |
| <b>September 17th</b> | "Old records, new music" part 2 with Peter Adamson                                     |



# THE OPERATIC VOICE OF THE VICTOR 1900 -1908

by George Taylor

I have been studying the first two volumes of Fagan and Moran's Encyclopedic Discography of Victor Recordings. The first volume covers the period to 1903 during which each size of record had its own matrix numbering sequence. Fagan and Moran call this the pre-matrix period. In April 1903, Victor introduced one numerical sequence which was independent of record size (which was maintained until 1942). Volume 2 covers the new matrix numbers 1 to 4999, the latter first used in January 1908.

My particular interest is in the operatic vocal recordings and this article is concerned with those listed in these two volumes. My title is derived from that of a Victor house organ, The Voice of the Victor.

Eldridge Johnson, who supplied Berliner with gramophones, had been experimenting with recording on wax discs since 1896. In early 1900, he started making records for sale. In mid-year, he stopped supplying Berliner and started trading as the Consolidated Talking Machine Company, and early records were issued with such a label. In March 1901, Johnson established the Victor Talking Machine Company. The pre-matrix period includes 1900.

In these early days, the records were 7" diameter. The first Victor 10" discs were recorded on 3rd January 1901 (strictly speaking, not yet Victors), but in the pre-matrix period, the bulk of the output was 7". There were also 12" and even 14" records briefly; and a few years later, in the matrix period, 8" records also. In the matrix period,

the record sizes were designated by letter prefixes to the matrix number (or as Victor officially called it, serial number): A = 7", B = 10", C = 12", D = 14" and E = 8". On occasion, the same selection was recorded on more than one record size at the same session (perhaps even at the same time?).

How did opera recording fare in the early days of Victor? Let's take the pre-matrix period first. The 7" records had sequential numbers prefixed by A. The 10" records had their own block starting with 3001 (highest number 3623) with prefix M, the 12" series was 31001 to 31099, and the 14" series was from 41001 to 41022.

Though the main commercial recording operation seems to have started in May of 1900, several of the listed recordings are as early as January of that year. Fred Gaisberg had spent January 1900 learning the new process, and in June, he and Johnson's assistant, Belford Royal, were off to Italy to record - some of the fruits making their way back across the Atlantic are on A1000 to A1009. Meanwhile recordings were being made in Camden, New Jersey.

In all, I counted 79 vocal operatic recordings in the pre-matrix period (and there were a lot of others by instrumentalists). There were 63 7" recordings, 12 10" and 4 14". This is in a total output of about 2800 recordings, of which about 2100 were 7", 621 were 10", 99 were 12" and 22 were 14".

The first operatic was on A69 (8th June 1900), Mephisto's serenade from Gounod's 'Faust' a very popular opera for recording singers. In this case, the 'singer' was George Broderick, who appears in the artist index as a reciter!

No less than 31 operas are represented. With regard to number of recordings, the joint winners are 'Trovatore' and 'Robin Hood' with eight each. 'Robin Hood'? This now-forgotten comic opera, evidently very



popular at the time, was composed by the Connecticut-born Reginald de Koven (1859-1920). It was by far his most successful opera, first heard in 1890. It was given in London as 'Maid Marion' (perhaps to avoid confusion with MacFarren's opera of the same title). Other high scorers were 'Faust' (7), 'Carmen' (5), 'Bohemian Girl' (5), 'Pagliacci', 'Traviata', and 'Barber of Seville' (all 4 each).

On the whole, the singers are little more than names now. This is the period before the birth of the prestigious Red Seal series. Twenty singers contributed. Those remembered now include the baritone Emilio de Gogorza (1874-1949), who recorded prolifically, was later promoted to Red Seal status, and who became Victor's artistic director. His association with the company continued until 1928. The soprano Rosalia Chalia (1864-1948) had recorded prolifically for Bettini in the 1890s. The Australian contralto Ada Crossley (1874-1929) recorded at the end of the pre-matrix period, but her records were the first of the new Red Seal series starting in 1903. She had studied with Marchesi in Paris and Santley in England. In 1903, she was on an extensive North American tour. She also recorded for Pathé.

The start of the use of the sequential single matrix system independent of record size was 24th April 1903, though a few recordings were made under the old system for a short time thereafter. The Red Seal series started then, and, in contrast with the pre-matrix period most of the operatic selections are sung by artists with international careers, and all of them whom have Red Seal status. In the matrix series 1 to 4999 I counted 409 operatic vocals. All are Red Seal except for 77. The Red Seal artist list is indeed a formidable one of 32 names. Following Ada Crossley is the American mezzo-soprano Zélie de Lussan (1864-1949) whose recordings span the end of the old system and the start of the new; all were

issued as Red Seals and were given new matrix numbers (B15-20 inclusive). She sang at Covent Garden between 1895 and 1902 with the likes of Melba and Jean de Reske, and from 1898 to 1900, she appeared at the Met in New York. She also recorded for Beka.

Virtually all the Red Seal artists are well known to collectors of old operatic records today. Unknown to me was the soprano Elda Cavaleri (1876-?) (not Lina), about whom I still know nothing except that she recorded no less than 15 operatic vocals in two sessions in July and October 1906. Another unknown was the tenor Augustin (or Francisco) Nuibo (1874-1948). This French artist sang at the Met in 1904 and 1905 (when he changed his forename at the wish of the Directors). He also recorded for Columbia and in France on Pathé discs. And what about the tenor Ellison van Hoose (1868-1936)? He recorded six operatics, including one with de Gogorza and two with Mario Ancona. Two of his three solos are the same aria from 'Lohengrin' (C2795 and C3017), both apparently published) and his 'Celeste Aida' (C3016) was reissued on IRCC 117, so he sounds interesting.

This time, I counted 91 operas from which selections were recorded. Our old friend 'Robin Hood' appears again; but the leader by a long margin is 'Faust' with 41 recordings, followed by 'Rigoletto' with 19 and 'Martha' with 15. Other operas scoring 9 or more are 'Carmen' (14); 'Pagliacci' (12); 'Barber of Seville' (11); 'Traviata', 'Cavalleria Rusticana' and 'La Bohème' (all 10); 'Tosca', 'Otello', 'Gioconda' and 'Sonnambula' (all 9).

Among the opera rarities also represented were 'Le Chalet' (Adam), 'Véronique' (Mésager), 'Le Timbre d'Argent' (Saint-Saëns), 'Der Vogelhändler' (Zeller) and 'La Mascotte' (Audran). The Adam work was the most popular of his operas in France in the nineteenth century, so it is not surprising to see the great French bass Pol Plançon



(1854-1914) recording an aria. Perhaps, however, it is surprising not to find an aria from Adam's 'Le Postillon de Longjumeau', which was much more popular outside France, particularly with tenors. Messenger's 'Véronique' had been played in New York in 1905, and perhaps the (non Red Seal) recording of April 1906 was capitalising on this. Saint-Saëns' opera was premièred in the same year as his better known 'Samson et Dalila'; but here, the recording is not by a French artist, but by America's own Ellen Beach Yaw, the Lark Ellen. Carl Zeller's opera was the most popular of that composer's operettas, having been produced in 1891, as was Audran's work, first seen in 1880.

The Red Seal singer with the most recordings (up to matrix 4999) was de Gogorza with 51 (not including his non Red Seal efforts). Caruso scored 31; but he was outsung by Sembrich (39), Emma Eames (32) and Louise Homer (34), not to mention Pol Plançon (38). However, these figures pale into insignificance when we find that Pryor's Band scored 485 (nearly 10% of Victor's total output), and the baritone Harry Macdonough cut 336 discs, not including a further possible 250 with the Haydn Quartet. Sousa's band also scored highly at 285.

All in all, the operatic side of Victor's recording activity had got off to a good start. In the pre-matrix period, when the gramophone was hardly accepted as a serious reproducer of music, the output of operatic vocal recordings was 3% of the total; while after the advent of the Red Seal series, the figure rose to over 8%. The good work was to continue.

#### **Sources:**

The Encyclopedic Discography of Victor Recordings, compiled by Ted Fagan and William Moran. Published by The Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut and London.

Vol.1: Pre-Matrix series 12th January 1900 to 23rd April 1903: The Consolidated Talking Company, Eldridge R. Johnson, and the Victor Talking Machine Company, with a special appendix "The Victor Talking Machine Company" by B. L. Aldridge. 1983

Vol.2: Matrix series: 1 through 4999: The Victor Talking Machine Company 24th April 1903 to 7th January 1908. 1986

## **NORTHERN GRAMOPHONE AND PHONOGRAPH SOCIETY**

The Northern Gramophone and Phonograph Society, based in Yorkshire, is still alive and kicking. We meet on the 3rd Sunday of each month, alternating between Armley Mills Industrial Museum, Leeds and members' houses. A varied programme has been arranged for the year and anyone is welcome to join. Contact the Secretary at the address and telephone number below:

**Margaret Hebden,** [REDACTED]  
Avenue, LEEDS LS10 3SS. Tel: [REDACTED]

## **THE MUSICAL MUSEUM**

368, High Street, Brentford, Middlesex TW8 0BD has created a small exhibition to mark the 60th anniversary of the opening of The Regal Cinema, Kingston. This will remain open during the 1992 season.

## **HELP PLEASE**

Would anyone who found a red-brown wallet with banker's card and cash at the Phonofair at Fairfields School Northampton on Saturday 9th May 1992 please telephone 0932-75956.





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